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FROM

Ferris Greenslet.



THE LAST DAYS OF
THEODORIC THE OSTROGOTH
AND OTHER VERSES

THE LAST DAYS OF
THEODORIC THE OSTROGOTH
AND OTHER VERSES

“Φθίνει μὲν ἰσχὺς γῆς, φθίνει δὲ σώματος,
θνήσκει δὲ πίστις, βλαστάνει δ' ἀπιστία,
καὶ πνεῦμα ταῦτ' οὐ ποτ' οὐτ' ἐν ἀνδράσιν
φίλοις βέβηκεν οὔτε πρὸς πόλιν πόλει.
τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἤδη τοῖς δ' ἐν ὑστέρω χρόνῳ
τὰ τερπνὰ πικρὰ γίγνεται καθ' οἷς φίλα.”

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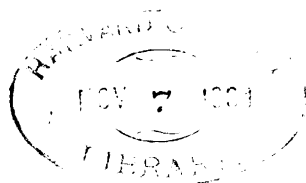
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George Grennell

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THE LAST DAYS OF
THEODORIC THE OSTROGOTH

*O frustra mihi suscepti labores ! O spes fallaces et
cogitationes inanes meae ! Ubi nunc Senatus
est . . . ubi Italiae voces ?*

6.

THEODORIC THE OSTROGOTH.

HEAVY with woe, my lords, the news ye bring :
Heavy with woe to Rome, death to her king.
Of all my golden hopes, is this the end ?
Scorned by the man I held my truest friend,
Deceived by him whose truth had been my boast,
Betrayed by him I loved and honoured most :
Boethius false ! Was that the word ye brought ?
Is this the high reward for which I fought,
The final prize of fifty years of strife,
The crowning glory of a toil-worn life ?
Boethius false, and striving for my fall !
The Roman Senate ready at his call
To rise in arms against me ! every town
Ripe for rebellion, eager to tread him down

Whom once they hailed as saviour ! whose worst
blame

Was love of Rome, love of her ancient fame,
And trust in Roman honour. Even so.
Friends, has this world more woful sight to show
Than a heart-broken king ?

I longed for rest
But ye foreshow new labours. In my breast
A thousand doubts and fears strive each with each
Till I am rack'd with torment. I beseech
That ye, who knew me in a happier day,
Desert me not when Fortune turns away ;
That ye at least prove truer men than those
Who bore the name of friends and wrought the work
of foes.

No trivial boon it was Rome took from me.
Beneath the foot of alien lords lay she
Who once had ruled the world. Freedom was dead ;
Justice and peace from their old home were fled ;

Gone was her ancient might. What Roman arm
Then rose to shield fair Italy from harm ?
What Roman sword was drawn to strike one
What Roman voice dared rise against the foe ?
Nay, but 'twas I, Theodoric, who slew
Dread Odoacer ! I it was o'erthrew
That mercenary band or forced to flee.
'Twas I, the alien Goth, who set Rome free !

Was it a base desire that filled my breast ?
A selfish longing, an ignoble quest ?
God is our Judge ; nor do I dread to hear
Judgment from Him to whom all things are clear.
Yet why do now these Romans, whom I saved,
Murmur against me, like a race enslaved ?
Have they begun to hate their liberty
Because they hold it as a gift from me ?
Has Rome to-day so lost her ancient pride
As scorn the rights for which old Romans died ?
Let her beware, lest losing them once more
She find no second facile conqueror,

And learn too late that Freedom rests with none
But those who in her cause have fought and won.

As unto him who lies upon a plain,
Death-stricken by a wound, there comes again
His long-forgotten youth, and all his life
From childhood's stainless age to manhood's strife
Passes before him like a pictured scroll :
So in this hour of doom I see unroll
The dusty annals of forgotten years ;
Battles and feuds, long-buried hopes and fears,
A hundred bye-gone hazards I behold ;
The wars I waged and won in days of old,
The mocking tombs wherein dead glories lie,
And ghosts of great deeds wrought in years gone by.

O countrymen, bethink ye of the day
When, mad for honour, burning for the fray,
We swept across Pannonia tempest-strong,
Scattered the Gepid host, a myriad throng,

Dyed their own rivers with their own hearts'
And raised, on plains where hostile bands had
The Ostrogothic banners! Call to mind
How we, beneath Verona's ramparts lined,
The baffled host of Odoacer saw,
Dreading to fight and dreading to withdraw!
How I, to whom defeat was still unknown,
And all on fire for glory, dashed alone
Hither and thither 'mid the battle's press
In all the splendour of my kingly dress,
Mark for a thousand weapons! How the foe
Where'er I came, fell back and back as though
I were a god! And how above the strife
Of hurtling darts, each destined for a life,
Above the clash of sword and shattering lance,
Above the shouts that mark'd the foe's advance,
Above the shrieks of piteous agony,
Was heard my comrades' conquering battle-cry
Raised everywhere, 'Theodoric the King!'

Still do I seem to hear those voices ring
With shouts of joyous triumph, as in dread
Adown these golden fields the foemen sped,
Whilst armed with treble victory you and I
Encamped upon the plains of Italy.
Was that the end? No morning dawned but brought
Fair tidings of new honours, all unsought,
To add more splendid lustre to my fame
And teach the foe to dread the Gothic name.
A score of warlike tribes increased my host,
A hundred towns were mine from coast to coast,
Cities whose names I knew not owned me king
And sent free tribute for their ransoming.
And last of all came those grim lords whose might
Erstwhile had swayed the world. Long quenched in
night
Was all the glory of their old renown,
And not a foe so weak as feared their frown.
Shorn of their pride, nor stately as of yore,
And haughty in mock majesty no more,

Security to crave for lands and home
All humble came the Senators of Rome.

And did I spurn their prayer, and basely seek
To ring their towers with flame, that I might
Vengeance on them for wrongs their fathers wrought
Was this the crowning glory I had sought?
Was I on dust of Caesars fain to tread,
Or spurn the ashes of a hero dead?
Did I hurl down one statue from its base,
One temple pillage, or one tomb deface?
Or bid my Gothic warriors unroll
And flaunt my banner o'er the Capitol?

Nay, not of me shall future ages read
Such deeds as these. A time there was indeed,
But long ago, when heart and soul were fired
With deadly hate for Rome; when I aspired
To lay the city waste, drench Gothic swords
In Roman blood, and lead my northern hordes

To burn and slay throughout all Italy;
To make a desert land from sea to sea,
And Rome the dying name of a dead state.

Such was the strength of that presumptuous hate
Which stirred me, in my far Pannonian home,
While yet in years a child, to strive with Rome.

Better for me my hate had never failed
With growing years, nor that red fury paled
That spent its fickle madness in an hour!
Better my sword, when Rome was in my power,
Had drawn the blood of every Roman foe,
And dealt the Roman name one deadly blow,—
That Italy no native laws might own,
But learn them from the Ostrogoth alone.

Yet lo, how soon the boldness of my aim
Shrunk at the glory of the Roman name!
How soon my heart, forgetting to despise,
Learn'd to revere its sacred memories!

How soon I felt, when first her soil I trod,
That strife with Rome were warring with a
I knew that I was mortal, though a king;
And where was living mortal that could bring
Death to eternal Rome?

And then what seem'd
A wish more noble than of old I dream'd
Burned in my bosom: for I vowed to be
Rome's champion, never more her enemy!
No task of mine 'twould be to lay her low
And win dead laurels from her overthrow,
Beat Rome upon a hundred crimson plains
And know that Heav'n was mocking at my pains.
I vowed that I henceforth should teach her foes
How stricken Rome could answer blows with blow
That Gothic spears on Roman walls should rise
Not against Rome, but 'gainst her enemies;
That nations at her frown should quake in dread
And tremble once again beneath her legion's tread.

Am I a perjured king ? Was that stern vow
In aught left unfulfill'd ? Answer me now,
Ye Romans most un-Roman, who in scorn
Taunt the 'Barbarian !' Centuries unborn
The deeds I wrought for Rome may still recall,
And know me truest Roman of them all ;
Whose fame perchance as surely will out-last
Those less-than-men who ape a god-like past
As marble tombs the grass-blades at their base.

And who are these, to taunt me to my face
With cries of Craven, Heretic, Foresworn,
Arch-foe of Heav'n, Theodoric Hell-born !
Are these the men to teach high truths, or stir
Young hearts with yearning ? That smooth presbyter
Who lifts with one clean hand the bread of life,
And 'neath his robes conceals the dripping knife,
Crimson'd with murder ! Who in lust of gain
Preaches of love, yet gloats o'er human pain !

The monk who once wrought deeds too black
Yet apes the saint within his convent-cell !
Priests who for all their darkest crimes declare
They hold God's warrant in the robes they wear

O piteous fate that dooms me to such woe :
That I, who laboured all my years to show
Wise ruling, perfect justice, noble aim,
Am now, by those I loved, loaded with shame,
By those for whom I toiled, branded with hate.
I found Rome shrunk and weak, I made her
Her justice fraught with vice, I made it true ;
Her laws corrupt, I strengthen'd them anew ;
All strife within her bounds I made to cease,
And gave her thirty years of golden peace.
All this I did ! And now when I am grey,
When age creeps on and strength has passed
When I am fitted least to cope with ill,
A thousand woes and dangers face me still.

O Fate, so full of promise in life's spring,
Thou pressest sorely on a dying king!
The night is come; my fighting hour is past;
Surely I need a resting-time at last.
Rest? Can I rest who have so much to do,
Such toils to face, such wars to wage anew?—
All hope destroyed, all pleasure turned to woe,
My labours all once more to undergo!

Tears! Have I wept? I thought no mortal pain
Could wring one tear from these dull'd eyes again:
Eyes that have gazed so long on man's distress
That death's own form has lost its hideousness.
Yet have I wept at death. When life was new,
When labours were untried and sorrows few,
I dwelt, boy-hostage, in the palace-walls
Of proud Byzantium. 'Mid its gorgeous halls
And carven columns rich with spoils of art
I wander'd freely; yet my childish heart,

Neglecting these, soon found its deepest joy
In one child-friend, a sweet-voiced, dark-eyed
Slave to the emperor. All our days we spent
Each at the other's side, and ever bent
Each on the other's pleasure. At my prayer
Oft would he pause in play, and make the air
Throb with the strains of some rich melody;
And as those clear true notes rang to the sky,
Telling—as 'twas most oft—of heaven's grace,
I sat in maze, gazing on that rapt face,
Hair streaming, hands enclasp'd, and eyes upturned,
And thought a mystic auriole round him burned,
Scarce trusting him to be of mortal birth,
But one of God's own angels sent to earth.
And so the slave forgot his slavery,
The hostage wish'd no longer to be free.
Then lo, there came a change. Dim grew the
That once had blazed in saint-like ecstasy,
Or flash'd in innocent pleasure. Day by day
I watch'd his fair cheek fading; ev'n at play

Listless he drooped. Then like the wintry blast
That tears the flowers of summer, death at last
Sought him and slew.

I seem to see him there,
So still, so cold, so mute, and yet so fair
That death in him seemed but a tired child's rest.
I laid one pure white lily on his breast,
Then wept, because my best-loved friend was dead.

Why was I left in loneliness to shed
Those heart-wrung tears of anguish? Not a woe
Had ever fall'n on him, nor would he know
A grief for evermore: while I had still
Long weary years of labour to fulfil,
Then find at last my life's work wrought in vain,
And crown'd with sorrow learn to weep again.

Come, scatter dust upon an age outworn,
And so pass on in hope. The years unborn—
When I have found the rest for which I crave
In that still, dreamless slumber of the grave—

Will bring you noble aims, new deeds, new laws
And stouter champions to defend your cause,
And wiser kings to counsel you than I.
What though my glory fade from memory,
And men deny my toils the meed of praise?
Enough for me to know that after-days
Will see the work fulfill'd wherein I failed,
Will see my people's glory unassailed,
Crowned with more lasting triumphs than were
Men's eyes are dim; the future gives no sign
Of aught that is to be; we can but trust
That good will vanquish evil. God is just.
It may be—for the voice of time is dumb—
That years of toil and war are still to come,
Of civil tumult, slavery and pain;
Yet at the last this land I loved will gain
Freedom and peace, and men once more will see
A glorious and united Italy.

THE PILGRIM FATHERS



THE PILGRIM FATHERS.

*Back to his icy palace in the north,
Back to his home whence came he raging forth
With brandish'd spear down to these lowland plains
To smite the world and bind it in his chains,
Back to his home old Winter baffled flees,
A vanquished conqueror. The warm south breeze
Touches the mighty forest, and it wakes
From death-like slumber; now the dark soil breaks
Its manacles of ice; streams that were dumb
Now wake the forest echoes as they come
With headlong rush down to the quiet sea,
Glad with the new delight of liberty.
No tempests now beset our new-made home,
No madden'd ocean hurls its spray and foam*

Here at our doors; the storms have taken flight,
And leave the sky as tranquil and as bright
As though a cloud had never cross'd its blue;
The birds come forth to greet the world anew,
And flood the air with joyous carolling,
'Mid all the sweetness of an English spring.

But this is not the land we know and love,
'Tis not an English heav'n that smiles above,
No English lanes and fields before me lie,
But all is strange and new that meets the eye.
Here on a lowly mound I rest, and gaze
Far as mine eyes can see, and in the haze
There where the ocean mingles with the skies
I seem to see the cliffs of Cornwall rise.
I watch the tide-waves break, and think that each
May once have roll'd upon an English beach,
And so I bid it welcome; every bird
That has its like at home seems to bear word

friends afar ; and every breeze
to westward from across the seas
of England

But my dreams are vain,

never see my home again.

For I shall
never I not return, though to receive
the world's wealth for guerdon. Can I grieve
At woes which I embraced, or shun the toil
I gladly to meet ? Or shall I spoil
The purpose of my life, and coward-like
Run from a foeman's presence lest he strike ?
That were no true man's part : yet am I free
In vacant hours to turn from all I see
And muse upon the dangers that are flown,
And all the joys and sorrows we have known
Since first we left our quiet English fields,
Daring all perils that the wide world yields,
Obedient to God's will ; for then I feel
New strength of mind and limb, a sterner zeal,

A more courageous heart in danger's face,
A firmer trust in God's exceeding grace.

England, my mother England, thou hast reared
A race of mighty sons whose strength is feared
Through all the world; mighty of arm and brain
They labour for thy glory not in vain.
They make thee queen of nations; they uphold
Thine honour in all lands. Now as of old
Thou dwellest on the heights of fair renown,
Thy brows encircled with the proudest crown
E'er lent to earthly king. Victor in peace,
Victor in war, thy glory shall not cease,
Nor dim shall grow thy name o'er land and sea,
While English hearts still beat with love for thee.
Why, O my mother England, didst thou spurn
Us from thy side who loved thee, and who turn
With wistful eyes unto thy pleasant shore
Which we with joyful step shall tread no more?..

Down pride reject our fealty
Up the homage that we render'd thee
Our heart's devotion and our love
Be that we gave to God above?
Behold, children craved no costly gift;
Yield to thy asked for freedom to uplift
Behold, of love to God in our own way,
We only from books but from our hearts to pray.
Our hymns then, warred against the living Christ?
Have we, that He whose life was sacrificed
We dreamed that mortal men might live eternally
That mortal only love and mercy: therefore we,
Preach'd weak and few in numbers, ever sought
Though the gentle Gospel that He taught
To learn from Himself; yet did we never strive
Straight from the wills of others, or to drive
To bend men unto a shrine abhorr'd,—
Unwilling men to prove a Gospel's truth by fire and sword
Or ape omnipotence in mortal might.
Is man a God, to mould men's souls aright?

Christ needs not fire nor blood to plead His cause,
Nor human tears to ratify His laws,
And they have lied who say His will is nought
Till sanction'd by the laws that kings have wrought.

So from thy shores to Holland's strand we pass'd,
Loving thee still, dear England, to the last,
But loving more our duty to our God.
And soon upon an alien land we trod,
Welcom'd by kindly men who spurn'd us not
And bade us dwell in peace. An exiled lot
For dreary years we bore. No day but brought
Full share of toil; no gladness but was fraught
With pain and sorrow. Ten such years we spent,
And ne'er was breathed a word of discontent,
And none was heard to murmur at his woes.
God was our Friend: what matter'd who were foes?

But still our hearts were troubled. How could we
Be gay amid a world of infamy?

W 21 H
For
To them
But such as
Swollen
Crawling
Spantless
Careless
Scoffing

around us, and we saw the ways
men who gave to God no praise
goodness ; men who paid no heed
who loved them most, and held no creed
as men whose god is Self can hold ;
with pride, selling their souls for gold,
at empty pomps of rank and name,
in lust, greedy for power or fame,
life till life brought misery,
of death until they came to die.

Was this a world where we could hope to lead
Our little ones to lisp a sinless creed,
And keep them free from taint ? A world where
we,

Who longed to leave our faith in purity
Unto our children's children when we died,
Could guard their steps from danger, or could hide
From their pure eyes the evil that lay near ?
Was it a world wherein we need not fear

Our boys might grow forgetful of their land,
Merged in an alien race ?

And so we plann'd
Another pilgrim-journey far away,
Turning our longing eyes from day to day
To that new country in the distant west,
Where we might lead pure lives and be at rest,
We and our children; where we might up-raise
Our simple hymns of love and earnest praise
Afar from sinful men who knew not God;
Where we might build, on land by man untrod,
A spotless shrine of faith; where we might prove
Far worthier in meekness and in love
Of Him who bade us follow undefiled
The pure example of a stainless child.

And so began our second pilgrimage.
But ere we went with strenuous hearts to wage
New strife with toils unknown, we knelt in prayer
With him we loved, our pastor, from whose care

that we should pass. With sorrow meek,
on that last night, we heard our pastor

Brothers, since first we came, an exiled band,
From that dear land we loved, from that dear land
Which gave us birth, and whose too harsh decrees
Drove us to find new homes beyond the seas,
Ever it was to my task from day to day
To lead you in God's own appointed way.
Too weak was I, too weak for task so hard,
To guide your steps aright or wisely guard
Your thoughts and deeds from erring; for I knew
That I was often far less pure than you,
Less patient, less courageous and less meek.
But yet, though I myself were frail and weak,
I knew if it indeed were God's own will
That none but I His purpose should fulfil,
I knew that He, who called me by His voice,
Had power to make me worthy of His choice;

(29)

And so I gave Him thanks who will'd it so,
And strove to be your guide in weal and woe.
And if it be that I have ever wrought
Deeds that bore fruit amongst you, or have sought
Not all in vain, to lead you in His ways,
Then unto Him who strengthen'd me give praise,
But not to me, His lowly instrument.'

'And now the latest hour is almost spent
That binds me to my people. Heaven's grace
Perchance again may bring us face to face,
Or it may be you shall not see me more
Until we meet upon that further shore—
Further than that strange land to which you go—
Beyond the grave. These things we cannot know,
Yet grieve not at our parting; this should be
A day of ever-hallowed memory
To you and to your children. He whose care
And boundless love have taught you how to bear

ceaseless toil from year to year,
 when danger threatens, be less near
 you at your need. His own right hand
 will surely guide you to the land
 To which He bids you dwell. Take courage, then:
 He biddeth strength than that of mortal men,
 Wherewith He biddeth love than ever mine has been,
 A greater love than mine, will keep you safe; an arm unseen,
 Stronger than mine, will guard you from each foe,
 And guide your footsteps wheresoe'er ye go.'

Of this be mindful: noble hearts and true
Are needful for the work ye have to do,—
Brave hearts, and trust in God, and strenuous will,
Meekness and love,—else can ye ne'er fulfil
The task that waits your coming. Have ye these?
Brothers, if doubts beset you, on your knees
Ask God for strength that He alone can send;
And if the stout heart fail, the proud will bend,

In face of toil and danger, let it be
A sign that ye have failed in purity,
Not that your God has left you in distress
Friendless, and in the savage wilderness.
But well I know that ye are brave and true;
I know ye will not fail, though ye are few
And many are your foes. Whate'er befall
Remember that ye are God's children all,
So let your hearts unite in perfect peace;
Let strife and wrath be shunn'd; let quarrels cease
And hatreds fail ere they have time to strike.
So shall ye prosper, living brother-like,
Working together 'neath your Father's eye,
Each loving each with pure hearts fervently.'

He paused, and there was silence. Then around
The low room where we sat, arose a sound
Of patient grief. We knew that he whose word
Fell on our ears to-day, might ne'er be heard

midst again; for who could say
Unsent trials still before us lay?
And there strong men their heads bowed low
In their grief; and women in their woe
Sad and tearful; little children too
To the and wonder at a scene so new
Set pale and mothers, weeping; not a face
In droop their mothers, weeping; not a face
That bore no stamp of sorrow or no trace
Of patient yearning and of inward pain.
Then in clear tones our pastor spake again.

Weep not, my brothers. 'Tis no cause for woe,
Rather for joy. At God's command ye go,
His chosen servants; at His will I stay
Who fain would share your dangers. Let us pray
That we may both the faithful servants be
Of Him who said, "Leave all and follow me."
No easy work He bids you undertake:
Wealth, honours, worldly joys must ye forsake.

When ye become His pilgrims ; for His tasks
No lily-handed lawn-sleeved priests He asks,
But bold true-hearted men, who do not fly
When danger comes, and do not fear to die.
It is not gold ye seek across the seas,
It is not lust of empire, or to please
Worldly ambition. May ye ne'er forget
The cause for which ye go, nor ever let
A baser thought prevail than moves you now.
Pilgrims ye are : let not your pilgrim's vow
Be merged in earthly longings ; better far
Retreat while ye have time, before ye mar
The sacred shrine of faith within your breast,—
The shrine that prayer has raised and God has bless'd.
So spake he, and was silent. But there stay'd
A memory of his words that could not fade
Or die within the minds of those that heard.
High beat our hearts with hope, for every word
Like shafts of sunlight through the forest-gloom
Opened the flower of faith to fuller bloom.

The last short night that we could spend
 We loved, with kinsman or with friend,
 Away in sweet converse and prayer.
 The summer morning, warm and fair,
 The little town wherein we lay,
 Fears perplex'd our parting day,
 At heart we hasten'd to the quay
 Our ship, impatient for the sea.
 Where we sailed, upon our vessel's deck
 And ere we sailed, upon our vessel's deck
 Stood wailing groups of friends, who without check
 Wept as they bade farewell. Each eye was dim
 As solemnly we sang one last sweet hymn
 Under the roof of heav'n: no man but felt
 A pang within his breast, as low we knelt
 To hear our pastor's blessing. On the quay
 Stood kindly strangers, grieving silently,
 Touched by an alien sorrow. Old and young
 Mingling their tears in fond embraces clung;
 Voices of grief spake to the list'ning air,
 And lips of men and children moved in prayer

And so our vessel stretch'd her wings of snow
And bore us out to sea; no thought of woe
Disturbed our hearts till England came in sight,
Only to fade away into the night
Never at any dawn to greet us more.
None then was found so stern that he forbore
To stretch his hands to England as she pass'd
For ever from our eyes between the vast
Blue tracts of sky and ocean. Then we cried
'Farewell, dear England,' weeping. O'er the wide
Sea-desert pass'd our 'Mayflower' day by day,
Kindred and friends and dear ones far away,
Sailing 'neath storm and sun. When sky and wave
Were bright and calm, with joyous hearts we gave
Meet thanks to God; and when the tempest-winds
Shriek'd round our ship, and terror fill'd our minds,
We learned thereby to trust more faithfully
In Him who walked upon the troubled sea,
And chid the savage tempest. So at last
When weeks of toil and watchfulness were pass'd

We saw **this** low coast forest-crowned emerge,
And hailed **New England** on the ocean's verge.
And then **there** came long months of toil and pain,
And ceaseless labours often wrought in vain.
For ere our feet had trod this unknown land
Grim Winter came and touched it with his hand,
So turned it into stone. Our hearts were bold,
Our arms were strong; yet toil, disease and cold
Took half our little pilgrim-band away,
And left the rest to suffer. Pass'd no day
Wherein we did not mourn a loved one dead.
What wonder that at times the living shed
Tears of despair and grief, or longed that they
Might lie at rest where all their dearest lay?
But now has pass'd that first long Winter drear
That met us at our coming. In mine ear
The first soft breeze of Spring-time whispers low,
And Winter's cruel blasts no longer blow.
New zeal and love drive out all thoughts of ill,
For now I know that God protects us still.

The **C**hrist, whom we have followed with all love,
In our **n**ew toils will watch us from above ;
And **H**e will keep us brave and firm in will
To bear the pains that we must suffer still.
For lo, man's life is one long pilgrimage.
The **b**right-eyed child, the old man bent with age,
Have **e**ach the pilgrim's scrip and staff to bear,
And **e**ach with each has dreary toils to share,
And **a**ll around him foes unwearied press
As **e**ach traverses life's long wilderness.
And **f**ew, indeed, are those who at the last
Can **g**aze triumphant at the dangers past,
Glad that the prize for which they strove is won,
Glad that their life-long pilgrimage is done.
But we, whom God has spared, must travel far
Before our journey's end. Our guiding star
Must lead us still when this great task which now
Before us lies is finished, ere our vow
Be cancelled or fulfilled. When night draws near,
Then let our star of faith shine bright and clear,

Let us be watchful still, nor cease to pray
While yet remains another hour of day.
Then may we come to God's own home at last,
His pilgrims still, with all our labours past,
Fainting and travel-stained, with weary feet,
Worn with our toils, but all prepared to meet
Our Saviour whom we loved, and in His breast
To hide our griefs away and so to rest.
Then sorrow and all sighs shall flee away,
And life's dark night shall dawn in God's eternal day.

TO C. L. W.

You asked me, dear, to write a little ditty
Upon a subject that yourself had plann'd;
You said it must be something very pretty,
And something you could easily understand,—
Without long words and sentences too grand.
You toss'd your pretty head in playful scorn, dear,
When I confess'd the task was very hard;
I said a poet was not made but born, dear,
And Nature had not fashion'd me a bard:
You cannot measure verse by inch and yard!
Yet when my inability I pleaded
You hid those sweet grey eyes beneath their shade,
My numberless excuses scarcely heeded,
And frown'd away each smile till I obey'd;
And when you smiled I felt myself thrice paid.

Your least wish is inviolable law, dear,
But yet the will can't always form the deed;
So if you see in this some little flaw, dear,
Why, pass it over gently as you read.
Let wish to please against my failure plead.

You ordered me to write in pleasing measure
Upon my lady-love whoever she be;
And I, rejoicing so to give you pleasure,
These rhymes have written for her as you see.
Did you not guess that you alone were she?

AUGUST, 1891.

TO H. W. C.-B.

With a Copy of a Children's Opera.

A **FITFUL** Muse was mine from babyhood,
And always loved to have her own sweet way;
She **has** a will that cannot be withstood
And grows a little stronger every day.

And now she's quite beyond my power to rule;
She snaps her fingers at my frowning brow;
She scorns my threats of punishment and school,
And what cares she for bread-and-water now?

For if I put a pencil in her hand,
She breaks the point, and laughing runs away;
'Why, no!' she cries, and bids me understand
That she must have another holiday.

At last a mute obedience may she feign,
And on her cherry lips I print a kiss;
She tells me she'll be naughty ne'er again—
But she's a very saucy, wilful miss!

Fantastic are the dresses that she wears,
Now dark and sombre, now all dazzling bright;
A different colour every hour she bears
And robs the rainbow for her sheer delight.

Yet we are suited well, my Muse and I;
For if I grieve, she brings a welcome light.
Thus she has mirth for both, and I supply
A mellowing tinge of sadness; which is right.

What though her wings but feebly beat the air?
What though they cannot bear her to the sky?
Some day, you know, she might fall down from there,
And hurt herself because she soared too high.

**She finds Parnassus' summits far too cold ;
She better loves about its slopes to run ;
Nor does she care, like Icarus of old,
To burn her wings through flying near the sun.**

**She holds a gloomy mind of little worth ;
With joy most often beams her merry face ;
And yet my Muse treads ever on the earth,
And finds it far more firm than airy space.**

**You knew her in her cradle long ago ;
Her early lisping no one heard but you ;
And so she bids me quickly let you know
For you this little play was written too.**

**I grant that she as yet may scarce know how
To modulate her voice or use her wings ;
But yet she thinks you'll hardly know her now,
Though still she is a Muse in leading-strings.**

She sends these rhymes to you, her friend and guide,
And hopes they may an idle hour amuse.
She wishes that the seas were not so wide
And you were nearer. She's a merry Muse!

NOVEMBER, 1892.

A FAREWELL.

YOU soon will sail away, away
 Across the stormy sea,
With many a thought of joys in store
 And never a thought for me.
But though the sea is broad and deep
 And though the world is vast
Each loving wish of mine for you
 Shall find you out at last.

The time that you may stay is short,
 The sun's broad rays decline,
And soon dim shadows must replace
 The joys that now are mine.
But though you're going away I'll keep
 Your memory ever new,
And though you're leaving me behind
 My heart will go with you.

To-day just with your sunny smile
My joy complete you made;
To-morrow, when you're gone away,
All happiness will fade.
'Twill seem as though your eyes from which
The sun takes all its light
Have drawn the beams away from me
And turned the day to night.

Yet why should dreary thoughts be mine
Or why should I complain,
Since bonny Scotland's loss is met
By sunny France's gain?
And though the sea is broad and deep
And though the world is vast,
Each loving wish of mine for you
Shall find you out at last.

MARCH, 1892.

A LAMENT.

As upon the purple mountains
Sombre to the view
Blazes forth a golden radiance
From the vaulted blue,
Turning shadow into brightness,
Darkness into light,
Bathing in a yellow glory
Each sky-pointing height:
So, my loved one, does thy presence
Scatter grief away,
Throws upon a cold existence
One transcendent ray.

As the sun when day is over
Gloomy leaves the height,
So, when thou no more art with me,
Joy has taken flight.

Life to me were cold and joyless,
Without thee 'twere drear;
Yet, though thou may'st never love me,
Never hold me dear,
Once or twice thy thoughts may linger
Tenderly on me,
When thou know'st that I am lonely,
All for love of thee.

CHILDHOOD'S CHIVALRY.

I AM my lady's knight-at-arms,
I love my lady well;
The number of her peerless charms
I know not how to tell.

My lady seems each day to be
More lovely than before;
And every day, so sweet is she,
I love her more and more.

Some day my little wife she'll be,—
I asked her long ago;
My wealth I'll make her share with me,
I love my lady so.

'Twas on last Christmas eve she said
That she would marry me;
A month since then has quickly sped,
Yet single still are we.

For though my lady answered 'Yes,'
Folks tell us we must wait;
Though I am ten, or something less,
And she is over eight.

I gave her then a ring to wear—
She has it yet, I know,—
We sealed the bargain then and there
Beneath the mistletoe.

Some day I'll cross the stormy sea
With savage foes to fight,
I'll wear a sword of steel, and be
A brave and noble knight.

And when I've won renown, once more
I'll see my lady sweet ;
I'll bring my trophies gained in war
And lay them at her feet.

THE SEA-FAIRY.

BENEATH the smile of the argent moon
Upon the golden sand
With glimmering pearls and rubies strewn,
Once danced a merry band
Of fays from Fairyland.

A mortal near them chanced to stray,
But when they spied him there
Like vanished dreams they fled away
To hold their mirth elsewhere,
And left the sea-shore bare.

One only had no wish to move
And wondrous fair was she ;
The raptured mortal, stung with love,
Cried, ' Wilt thou go with me ?
Sweet fairy, let us flee !

**'The world is wide, and we will seek
An island far away,
When we shall live in mirth, and keep
Throughout an endless May
A ceaseless holiday.'**

**The fairy heard, and answered low
'Alas, it cannot be!
Unless for ever I forego
My kingdom 'neath the sea
And immortality.'**

**'But love shall e'er be thine instead,—
Love that can never die!'
So from her comrades gay she fled,
And whispered no good-bye,
Nor breathed one farewell sigh.**

**The wings that bore her up and down
As swiftly as the wind,**

Her little fairy-jewelled crown
With starlight intertwined,—
She left them all behind.

Freely the price of love she paid
And cast no glance behind;
But soon from her his fancy stray'd
For wayward was his mind,
And changeful as the wind.

'I longed for thee when thou didst dance
Upon the jewelled shore;
My senses thou didst then entrance,
But that can be no more:
My love for thee is o'er.'

'Alas,' she answered, 'I have lost
My ocean-home for thee!
And this brief happiness has cost
My kingdom 'neath the sea
And immortality.'

Laughing, he left her with her grief;
Her love he could not kill;
She wept to give her heart relief,
But though against her will
She knew she loved him still.
A gloomy rock o'erhung the sea
And it became her piteously
And there with sad dolour throne;
She sang sad strains alone:
She sat and made her moan,
And still 'tis said at his boat
The mariner hears that night
A piteous voice that seems to float
Clear from that rocky height
Black in the wan moonlight.

TO E. K. W.

UPON a dimpling lake I saw
The silver moonbeams play;
A dark cloud swept across the sky,
And slowly, as if loth to die,
They melted all away.

I heard a lark pour forth one morn
Its thrilling song on high;
My heart grew glad at the joyful sound,
And yet in my heart no echo I found
Of the bird's sweet melody.

I saw a sunny smile o'erspread
The face of a lovely maid;
It trembled on laughter's verge for a while,
Then slowly it faded away; but the smile
In my heart ever since has stay'd.

I heard a lovely maiden speak ;
The words were gentle and few.
As they fell from her perfect lips they stole
Unconsciously, silently, into my soul,
And repeated themselves anew.
I have not seen that sunny smile
Nor heard that voice since then ;
And though they never cease to fill
My heart, I cannot rest until
I hear her speak again.

TO H. W. C.-B.

With some of the author's verses.

AS one who gives his days and nights to seek
For Roman weapons, Saxon earthenware,
Old headless statues, prints and pictures rare,
And ancient scrolls in Gothic or in Greek,—
As such a one will never tire to speak
Of such grim objects of his love and care
To those unlucky friends who neither share
Nor understand his love for the antique:
So these old thoughts I wish to show to you
Which I have chanced from time to time to find
(Not knowing how they came or how they grew)
Lurking within the corners of my mind.
These songs are far less sweet than you can make,
But read them, Horace, for the author's sake.

TO MY MUSE.

MY Muse has donned a Puritan attire :

My Muse, who used of old to be so gay !

Her smiles and laughter all have passed away,

Her eyes that shone so bright have lost their fire,

And in a minor key she tunes her lyre.

She is my playmate and she will not play !

Come, tell me what it is has changed you so ;

Divide with me the cares that check your mirth,

And if they seem to me of little worth

Perchance I may have power to bid them go.

You have no other friend but me, you know,—

None other treats you well, in all the earth.

Yet garden flowers are surely just as [↑]tr
As those that clothe the hill-sides in the spring?
Does Nature not such blessings hither bring
As those her bounty scatters anywhere?
Of all that's sweet we have as good a share,
And in this garden birds as sweetly sing.

The winter now is gone, as if for aye;
The crocuses in order trim appear;
The early buds are sprouting far and near
And trees are growing greener every day.
Why need you to the country flee away?
Is this town-garden not to you as dear?

Ah no! Although it be so trimly deck'd
It pleases not. You do not care to stay
Where flow'rs are trained to grow in neat array,
Their tendrils twined round sticks, their wildness
check'd,
Clipped close that they retain the height correct,
Their shoots and blossoms not allowed to stray.

Here you shall reign as sovran of the ^{wr's,}
And I will murmur love-songs at ^{your} feet
In dreamy bliss and ecstasy complete;
Safe from the sun in mossy-cushion'd bow'rs
We too shall wile away the summer hours
Wrapt in a fleecy cloud of meadow-sweet.

And we shall watch the golden sunbeams dance
Like water-spirits tumbling in the spray,
And we shall dream and dream the live-long day
While unseen birds will lull us into trance
Singing of love's unrealised romance,
And you, my Muse, shall sing as sweet as they.

Would this not ease you of a world of woe;
Would this not make you feel to live were sweet;
Would such a life not make your joy complete?
Ah yes indeed, but it can not be so;
For now the vision passes, and I know
That only garden-walls conceal the street.

A SONNET.

I PRAY thee, Spirit, do not mock me so!
Each year, when we are drawing nigh to spring
A golden vision 'fore me thou dost bring,
Enticing me to flee the town and go
Where none could find me, none my haunts wo-
know;

Where you and I the live-long day would sing
Until our song made all the woodlands ring,
Then sleep beside the brook where hare-bells grow.
Ah, prithee hide that vision from my sight!
Sweet Spirit, do not whisper thus to me!
The sky is blue, the air is diamond-bright,
But in the gloomy town my home must be.
O Spirit, do not bid me flee away,—
Yet how I long thy whispers to obey!

They listen to the merry sound
Silvering all the air around
And when the night has turn'd to day
Whisper back to men
What we sing and what we say
Over and over again.
The fairies' life is wild and free,
The fairies' life is wild and free,
Wild and free !

II.

Out of countries far away
Here we come to sport and play,
Leaving labours yet undone,
Merry mischiefs half begun,
Here we gather, every one.

III.

Half the night we've travell'd here
As the sombre hours were fleeting ;
Nought detained our swift career
To attend the fairies' meeting.

We never know a grief or pain
And ever in sunshine or in rain

Joy is ours
As the hours
Every day
Glide away
Speedily
Merrily.

We dance by the light
Of a moonbeam bright
On the emerald ground
To the whispering sound
Of the tall birch tree
Whose melody

Fades away
As the day

Ushers in the morning light.

The fairies' life is wild and free,
The fairies' life is wild and free,
Wild and free !

So we pass the live-long night,
Happily, happily,
Till the eastern sky is bright,
Merrily, merrily.
Then when day comes, off we go,
And hide where reeds and rushes grow,
Or creep inside
A nodding flower
And safely hide
Till the evening hour.
Then we dance the live-long night,
Happily, happily,
Till the eastern sky is bright,
Merrily, merrily.

VII.

Hark, hark ! It is the farmer's horn !
We must away,
We cannot stay !
The birds salute the day new-born,

SONNET.

*Written in a volume of Mr. William Watson's
Poetry.*

As one who wanders in a desert drear
O'er arid sands and under rainless skies,
Where few oases meet the weary eyes
And seldom sparkling fountains ripple near ;
As such a toil-worn traveller may hear
With all the pleasure of a glad surprise
Through the parched ground a crystal streamlet rise
Making a welcome sound to greet the ear :
So I, when I was toiling vainly through
The barren land of modern poesy,
Heard suddenly one voice sing clear and full,
One voice whose notes rang out in purity,
In words that soothed my longing for the true
And slaked my soul's thirst for the beautiful.

MAY.

I WILL sing a little ditty
Be it grave or be it gay;
Be it solemn, be it witty,
I will sing it loud to-day.

Little skylark, tell me, tell me
Why thou carollest so long?
What wild secret joys impel thee
Thus to melt thy soul in song?

Hast thou neither plea nor reason
Why so gaily thou dost sing?
Dost thou hail the summer season
And the sweetnesses of spring?

O the town is dark and dreary
And the fields are bright and gay;
Of the city's gloom I weary
And I love the month of May!

So I'll join thee in thy singing,
Little skylark wild and free,
And the woods will all be ringing
With the joys of thee and me.

Shall our song be of the gay-time
That comes after winter's gloom?—
Of the happy, happy May-time
When the wild-flowers are in bloom?

O the summer is awaking
And has come with us to stay!
Let us sing the merry-making
Of this happy first of May.

Grief is absent, joys are near us,
And the day is sweet and long;
Tell me, skylark, who shall hear us,
Who shall listen to our song?

Flowers I'll gather, and prepare them
For a wreath as bright as day.
Tell me, what sweet maid shall wear them,—
Who shall be our Queen of May?

TO D. P. H.

With some old Verses.

FRIEND, blame me not that in my verse
I feign a grief I do not feel,
And call on cruel fate a curse
For blows which fate did never deal.

Chide not these labours as mis-spent
Although I freely grant it true
That I in mimic woe lament
The fate of one I never knew.

But I will tell, if you will hear,
How came these rhymes, so seeming vain;
And if my meaning is not clear
Then read once more, till all is plain.

(78)

There is a space of time, my friend,
During our life's quick-passing *spring*,
When new conflicting passions tend
To shake our faith in everything.

We doubt religion, doubt the soul,
Doubt all the truths revealed to man;
Distrusting some we shun the whole
And wish to start where all began.

And this creates a discontent,
A longing for we know not what;
A vague desire, a long lament,
A groping after what is not.

We seek ideals strange and vast;
Beaten, we only strive again,
Howe'er we come to feel at last
That all our striving is in vain.

(79)

We seek a *vague and* shadowy goal
That hovers near us night and day;
Yet if one asked us what the soul
Desired so keenly, could we say?

And some, who make the wiser choice,
Smother their dreams in worldly cares;
While some, to give their pain a voice,
Mimic a grief and make it theirs.

Too soon, alas, the fancied grief
Is left behind, an idle toy:
And then, for real pain's relief,
How gladly would we feign a joy!

Within a ruin old and grey
These rhymes were pencilled years ago;
Nor heedless am I now that they
The hand of one unpractised show.

Truly I would have burned them all,
These weak and hesitating rhymes,
But that old memories they recall
And bring before me bye-gone times.

In truth it was a pleasant scene
Where most of them were roughly writ;
'Twere hard to find a spot, I ween,
For quietness and thought more fit.

A ruined chapel by the sea,
With not a house or hamlet near,
Where many an ancient shatter'd tree
Slumbers half-dead from year to year.

You know it well; 'neath moon and star
Thither one night I guided you;
And o'er the silent bay afar
We heard the manor-clock strike two!

'Tis simply **built** ; **its** well-worn floor
No proud **ecclesiastics** trod ;
Yet those who in it prayed of yore
Perhaps were heard as soon by God.

How oft the walls I've climbed with glee
To swing the bell suspended high !
A bell which ever seems to me
Sweeter in tone as time goes by.

There is a window ivy-grown
And fringed around with tufts of weed,
Where hour on hour I've sat alone
Watching the sea-birds stoop to feed.

For there the great sea murmuring lies,
Lapping the shore with tiny waves;
Nearer, a lonely curlew cries
With child-like note above the graves.

A rusty railing guards below

'Midst many a lesser, meaner mound

The graves of those who long ago

Were lords of many an acre round.

I loved the place, and love it yet ;

Too lonely it might be for most.

There oft would I the world forget

And try to think myself a ghost.

No tomb was there unknown to me,

No epitaph was left unread ;

And strange it was to hear the sea

Moan endless dirges for the dead.

How oft have I, o'er random bones,

Philosophised on man's decay ;

How often kneeled on sunken stones

To scrape the lichen-moss away.

(83)

How often asked where those were fled
Who should by right that charge fulfil.
Strange, that of all who mourned the dead
The sea alone should mourn them still!

Mere child's philosophy was this.
I gloom'd myself with fancied woe;
Sad thoughts then almost seemed a bliss,
Because true grief I did not know.

O'er dim escutcheons have I pored
And broken crests deciphered well;
The armour of Dunfermline's lord
And Abernethy's scallop-shell.

'And who were these?' you ask. God knows.
No doubt they were two righteous men,
Held high in praise, we may suppose,
But died; and times have changed since then.

Would you learn more? I cannot tell
How either of them lived. Who can?
Although, of one, who lists may spell

HEIR LYIS ANE HONORABIL MAN.

In some old book Dunfermline's name
Perchance has found a little room;
If not, one fact a word may claim—
This, that he has a sumptuous tomb.

THE EXILE.

(From Victor Hugo, *Les Quatres Vents de l'Esprit*.)

BEHOLD the roses, exile forlorn,—

For May cometh radiant and glad as of old
And receives them full-blown from the tearful morn:
Exile, behold!

—Alas, mine eyes will backward glance
To the roses I sowed in a happier day:
The month of May to the exile from France
Is no true May.

Exile, behold the places of death.

May, who laughs to the skies that she loves,
Is making the grave-stones throb with the breath
And the kisses of doves.

—I can only think of the loved ones dead,—
Dear eyes, whose light has vanish'd away.
For the exile, all joy in the months has fled,
And May is not May.

Exile, behold how the tree-branch swings
Beneath the new nests interwoven on high;
May fills them with tiny white feathers and wings
And longings to fly.

—I can only think of the dear home-nest,
My own little darlings I left far away;
For only at home, in the land I love best,
Is May always May.

1896.

IN A COLLEGE CHAPEL.

I.

**How oft in vain we strive with eager gaze
To pierce the sombre veil that drapes the past!
To look beneath the shroud that time has cast
Over the rigid features of dead days!**
**How oft in vain we long to lift the haze
That screens futurity! Or slow or fast
The days and moments glide into a vast
And hidden region of untrodden ways.**
**But in these walls with hallowed memories stored
Mute is the voice of Time, his power nought;
Above the tide of ages have I soared,
Far o'er the world my spirit wanders free.**
**The past and future into one are wrought,
Merged in the ocean of eternity.**

II.

Shadows of gloom lie huddled here and there—

Dumb ghosts of dead days *shepherded by Night ;*
Save where the pure-voiced singers *robed in white*

With sacred strains of music thrill the air,

And stainless lips of children move in prayer.

Spirit of truth ! if unto mortal sight

Thou wouldst unveil thy beauty's perfect light

Surely 'twere in these walls where all is fair.

Such beauty shares not our mortality !

Can these sweet strains be chanted all in vain,

Prison'd by sculptured stone and painted glass ?

Nay, fear it not ! They were not made to die ;

Freed from the soul of man, to God they pass,

And then are sung by angel-choirs again.

III.

And lo, thou little white-robed chorister

With wondering eyes beneath so fair a brow,

No casual, careless singer seemest thou,

But like one sent to earth our hearts to stir—
As God's beloved angel-messenger.
What power has Time o'er such as thee, to plough
Age-furrows on a face so tender now,
Or cast a gloom where smiles of pleasure were
Ah surely none! Though I may wander far,
Ne'er hear thy voice again nor gaze on thee,
• Over the ocean-wastes of life the star
A child has lit will burn in purity;
And in my heart for ever shall I hear
Thy voice, unmarr'd by age, ring sweet and clear.

IV.

It seems a dream of loveliness outflown
From the unmeasured land of vision'd sleep;
Where sainted forms their hallowed vigils keep
In mystic realms to waking eyes unknown.
Surely 'tis no false vision Night has shown,
No mere phantasma called from darkness deep,
For which in vain awake I pray and weep!

Spirit of Beauty, whose fair shrine alone
Ever with love's white lily have I sought,
O grant that I, who devious paths have trod,
May yet with thee as guide at last be brought
To such clear knowledge of the pure and true
That Heaven itself may open to my view—
The veil be rent that hides me from my God.

DECEMBER, 1894.

'IF THOU WERT ALL.'

If thou wert all my heart would fain believe,
And if my mind but mirror'd thy true worth,
If hopes could not belie nor love deceive,
Then wert thou heaven-born and not of earth.
But though thou art like us of mortal birth
And not from human faults and weakness free,
Though thou must share our grief, joy, pain and
mirth—
Still, wherein comes the harm to thee or me
From linking dreams of truth and perfect good with
thee?

Love never came to me on broken wing
Or found a grudging shelter in my breast;
Love never shrank from me, a slighted thing,
Or found my heart a chilly place of rest.

Hid by the shadow of a funeral-pall!
Or will it grow still mightier than of yore,
Still purer from the changes that befall
This crumbling flesh, and fitter than before
To glorify the loved one ever more and more?
My love shall live while human hearts are beating,
My love shall live while stars in heaven shine;
Till all things else like phantom-shades are fleeting—
So long, so long shall live this love of mine.
Peace, troubled heart; no anguish need be thine
That love will share the fate of mortal clay.
What mundane power can vanquish things divine?
Lo! shuddering Death himself shall flee away
When mortal night is lost in God's eternal day.

1896.

Enough for me to know thee as thou art,
Of all God's creatures purest, noblest, fairest.
I cannot help but give thee all my heart
Although thou hast no thought for me nor carest.

I would not have thee waste a thought on me;
I would not have thy love bestowed so cheaply;
Though my best joy will still be loving thee,
Love's best reward, the power to love more deeply.

When **Mary** from a house of woe
Came forth, and wrung with anguish crept
Unto her **Master's** feet, to show
How **Death** came by and **Lazarus** slept,—
He did not scorn her. **Jesus** wept.

And so for sake of Him we plead—
Thy Son, who knows all human pain—
That Thou wilt help us at our need.
His tears were never shed in vain:
Will Christ not weep for us again?

Thou gav'st this child of Thine to fill
Our lives with sunshine here below,
And Thou canst take him at Thy will.
But we, who learnt to love him so,
We cannot bear to let him go.

LONGING.

I HEAR sweet strains from myriad spirit-voices,
Strange melodies that float from far away;
I weep with yearning, yet my heart rejoices
At things too deep and wonderful to say.
O that the spirit in me could obey
The parent Spirit of the world unknown,
Burst out from its dark prison-house of clay,
And make the mighty universe its own!
But lo, the way to Life passes through Death alone.

Sweet Spirit of eternal loveliness,
Soul of all truth and holy purity,
Thy lover's toils, O Spirit, approve and bless,
And hearken to thy lowly suppliant's plea!

THE ROSE.

OF late I had a rose of joy;
I watched its growth from hour to hour;
I let no evil thing destroy
My tender flower.

I guarded it from winter's blast,
I water'd it with happy tears;
I fondly dreamed its bloom would last
Through golden years.

But ere its tender petals blushed
'Neath summer sun with deepest hue,
There came a ruthless foot that crushed
My rose and slew.

(102)

IN A COLLEGE CHAPEL.

I.

How oft in vain we strive with eager gaze
To pierce the sombre veil that drapes the past!
To look beneath the shroud that time has cast
Over the rigid features of dead days!
How oft in vain we long to lift the haze
That screens futurity! Or slow or fast
The days and moments glide into a vast
And hidden region of untrodden ways.
But in these walls with hallowed memories stored
Mute is the voice of Time, his power nought;
Above the tide of ages have I soared,
Far o'er the world my spirit wanders free.
The past and future into one are wrought,
Merged in the ocean of eternity.

But like one sent to earth our hearts to stir
As God's beloved angel-messenger.

What power has Time o'er such as thee, to plough
Age-furrows on a face so tender now,
Or cast a gloom where smiles of pleasure were?
Ah surely none! Though I may wander far,
Ne'er hear thy voice again nor gaze on thee,
• Over the ocean-wastes of life the star
A child has lit will burn in purity;
And in my heart for ever shall I hear
Thy voice, unmarr'd by age, ring sweet and clear.

IV.

It seems a dream of loveliness outflown
From the unmeasured land of vision'd sleep;
Where sainted forms their hallowed vigils keep
In mystic realms to waking eyes unknown.
Surely 'tis no false vision Night has shown,
No mere phantasma called from darkness deep,
For which in vain awake I pray and weep!

'IF THOU WERT ALL.'

If thou wert all my heart would fain believe,
And if my mind but mirror'd thy true worth,
If hopes could not belie nor love deceive,
Then wert thou heaven-born and not of earth.
But though thou art like us of mortal birth
And not from human faults and weakness free,
Though thou must share our grief, joy, pain and
mirth—

Still, wherein comes the harm to thee or me
From linking dreams of truth and perfect good with
thee?

Love never came to me on broken wing
Or found a grudging shelter in my breast;
Love never shrank from me, a slighted thing,
Or found my heart a chilly place of rest.

Hid by the shadow of a funeral-pall!
Or will it grow still mightier than of yore,
Still purer from the changes that befall
This crumbling flesh, and fitter than before
To glorify the loved one ever more and more?

My love shall live while human hearts are beating,
My love shall live while stars in heaven shine;
Till all things else like phantom-shades are fleeting—
So long, so long shall live this love of mine.
Peace, troubled heart; no anguish need be thine
That love will share the fate of mortal clay.

What mundane power can vanquish things divine?
Lo! shuddering Death himself shall flee away
When mortal night is lost in God's eternal day.

1896.

LOVE'S DEVOTION.

I would that I were strong and pure and wise:
Then mightst thou take me to thy heart and love
me.

But who am I to win so great a prize?

I love in vain: thou art so far above me.

To-day I gazed upon thee silently:

Rapt in high thought thou passedst by unheeding.

If thou hadst known, thou mightst have sighed for me,

But how wast thou to guess my heart was
bleeding?

How couldst thou see that I did love thee so?

I gave no sign to show my heart's emotion.

I turned mine eyes away, lest they might show
The passionate secret of a soul's devotion.

Enough for me to know thee as thou art,
Of all God's creatures purest, noblest, fairest.
I cannot help but give thee all my heart
Although thou hast no thought for me nor carest.

I would not have thee waste a thought on me;
I would not have thy love bestowed so cheaply;
Though my best joy will still be loving thee,
Love's best reward, the power to love more deeply.

When Mary from a house of woe
Came forth, and wrung with anguish crept
Unto her Master's feet, to show
How Death came by and Lazarus slept,—
He did not scorn her. Jesus wept.

And so for sake of Him we plead—
Thy Son, who knows all human pain—
That Thou wilt help us at our need.
His tears were never shed in vain:
Will Christ not weep for us again?

Thou gav'st this child of Thine to fill
Our lives with sunshine here below,
And Thou canst take him at Thy will.
But we, who learnt to love him so,
We cannot bear to let him go.

Lord, there is none to fill his place

If he shall go to live with Thee.

We do but crave him for a space,

And then we grudge him not to be

Thine angel for eternity.

JULY 8, 1896.

LONGING.

I HEAR sweet strains from myriad spirit-voices,
Strange melodies that float from far away;
I weep with yearning, yet my heart rejoices
At things too deep and wonderful to say.
O that the spirit in me could obey
The parent Spirit of the world unknown,
Burst out from its dark prison-house of clay,
And make the mighty universe its own!
But lo, the way to Life passes through Death alone.

Sweet Spirit of eternal loveliness,
Soul of all truth and holy purity,
Thy lover's toils, O Spirit, approve and bless,
And hearken to thy lowly suppliant's plea!

(100)

O **g**rant that I in time may seem to thee
Not **a**ll **u**nfit to follow thee and trace

Thy steps with reverent tread, till I may see
The **f**ulness of thy glory and thy grace,
And **d**well in thine own realms and know thee face
to face.

There **i**s a light that glimmers like one star

Beyond the desert-ocean of my soul;
I may **n**ot reach it, for it shines afar,
And dangers lurk between me and my goal.

On jagged rocks I hear strange waters roll,
Many a wreck-strewn beach will meet my sight,
My bark will steer by many a hidden shoal:
Yet if the gleam be true, 'twill guide me right;
If false, then welcome death, though death be endless
night.

THE ROSE.

Of late I had a rose of joy ;
I watched its growth from hour to hour ;
I let no evil thing destroy
My tender flower.

I guarded it from winter's blast,
I water'd it with happy tears ;
I fondly dreamed its bloom would last
Through golden years.

But ere its tender petals blushed
'Neath summer sun with deepest hue,
There came a ruthless foot that crushed
My rose and slew.

(102)

Lowly its petals strewed the ground,
Gems in a broken diadem ;
I picked them as they lay around
The broken stem.

And sometimes, when my heart is sore,
The withered flower I disclose,
And gazing, dream I hold once more
My living rose.

What matter though my thoughts are vain,
And though I play with things that seem ?
If waking thoughts must bring me pain
Then let me dream.

A FAREWELL.

FAREWELL, dear cloister'd shades wherein
I loved to roam ;
Farewell, sweet alien fields more dear
Than those of home.

One shall ye know no more whom now
Full well ye know ;
For him shall skies more gloomy frown,
Winds fiercer blow ;

One who to books and lectures paid
Too little heed ;
Who never strove or longed to gain
The scholar's meed ;

But who amid thine age-worn walls
Well loved to dwell,
To hear within thy chancel dim
Sweet music swell;

Whose fancy haunted dryad-like
Thy flowers and trees,
And built amid thy nobler halls
Dream palaces.

Soon shall I sail on mightier tide
Than lazy Cher,
Beholding from an Eastern sea
An alien star;

And I in Asia's tropic lands,
Afar shall rove
'Mid wilder herds than those that dwell
In Magdalen grove.

And shall these scenes be all forgot
As years go past ?
Shall not the joys that here I knew
In memory last ?

The dreaming Tower that almost seems
Conscious of life,—
Not heedless all of change and woe
And manhood's strife ;

The splash of oar, the flow of stream,
The hum of bees ;
The murmur of sweet poets' lays
In languorous ease ;

Day-dreaming by the willows, lulled
By songs of birds ;
Rich fancies bred of youth and joy,
Too vague for words.

The languid murmur of a long
Warm summer's day;
And 'neath the Bridge the merry sound
Of boys at play.

But ne'er again am I to feel
Such joy as this;
Others will take the place I filled,
Taste equal bliss.

For me a sterner fate is set,
A darker lot;
And soon the place I love so well
Will know me not.

A happier, lighter step than mine
My haunts shall tread,
Where cornfields 'mid their spear-shafts wave
Their banners red.

And other eyes shall gaze at will
On park and bower,
And other ears shall hear the bells
Of Magdalen Tower.

Chime bells, chime bells! What though for me
A knell ye ring?—
To happier hearts than mine a sweet
Delight ye bring.

Thrice happy youth, if those glad chimes
Can bring to thee
A portion of the joy they brought
Of old to me.

GOOD-NIGHT.

GOOD-NIGHT, good-night, my loved one! All the ways

Grow dark, and twilight mute is stealing nigh.

Good night, my loved one! May thy future days

Be strewn with flowers of sweetness; from on
high

May blessings on thee fall eternally;

May grief and pain ne'er track thy steps, nor dare

To wrench from thy dear heart one piteous cry;

Or if a mortal woe be thine to bear,

God grant that I be near thee then, thy load to share.

Sleep, O my loved one, sleep in perfect peace,

Oblivious of all weariness and pain;

Unconscious of the pangs that never cease

To rack the waking mind with longings vain

And perished hopes that cruel time has slain.

Sleep, O my loved one, sleep till morning's light
Kiss thy fair cheek and bid thee wake again.
May all thy dreams be pure and sweet and bright.
My angel shadow-veiled, my white-souled love, good-
night.

TO THREE COLLEGE FRIENDS,

C. C., T. L., F. P. A.

FRIENDS, whose last words still haunt my memory,

Dear friends, whom I have left so far away,

What greeting shall I send you o'er the sea,

What message shall I write from far Cathay?

Alas, how many miles divide me now

From hall and chapel, 'schools' and scout and
don!

What may these names in China mean? I trow

'Tis a far cry from Oxford to Canton.

They know me not, these blue-gown'd Cantonese,

They have no care for all that I love most;

They never felt an English summer breeze,

They have no Oxford on this Eastern coast.

They think to stir my fancy with the view
Of temples, sampans, junks and banyan trees ;
They show me rice-fields, forests of bamboo,
And plantains, mangoes, oranges, lichees.

Alas, they cannot guess what flow'ry gems
Down Nuneham way and up by Cumnor grow ;
They never saw my liliated willowed Thames,
Nor Islip fields nor Marston Ferry know.

They have not stood where Cher, at languid rate,
Glides noiseless down by countless fairy scenes,
Where Magdalen sits enthroned in maiden state
An empress 'mid a galaxy of queens.

Then let me turn, dear friends, to thoughts of you,
Of you, and of the Oxford that I love ;
And dream of Magdalen as its form I view
Pictured and framed upon the wall above.

How oft in merry conclave would we meet
To cheer the day or spurn the gloom of night,
Careless of passing Time, whose tireless feet
Sped down youth's flowered way and meadows
Bright.

How oft we passed beyond the college-walls
To haunt the lanes and fields none knew so well,
Gaining far views of Oxford's towers and halls,
Hearing the distant boom of Christ-Church bell.

Nor did we, like some sluggish spirits, shun
Once every year to wake ere dawn of day,
To hear the singers greet the rising sun
On Magdalen Tower upon the first of May.

How oft in June we wandered lazy miles
'Mid elm and willow, oak and silver-birch,
And watched the village-children's happy smiles
When flowers and pence changed hands at Ifley
Church.

How oft you tried, dear patient souls, to bind
Unwilling me to work with books and pen.
In vain you tried to curb my wayward mind,—
Oxford was not the place for reading men!

O Magdalen, if your secrets men could hear,
What wondrous things to freshmen you'd relate!
What fairy-tales you'd whisper in their ear,
What deeds, what sports for them to emulate!

From that October term in ninety-four
When Magdalen stood knee-deep in river-flood,
When through the fields we sped with sail and oar,
And all the 'High' was bathed in fragrant mud;

To that last summer-term, when partings near
Made grief the mate of joy, forced mirth to sigh,
To that last picnic up by Eynsham Weir,
And that sad day that made us bid good-bye;

Through all those years, in light and shadow spent,
We four to friendship's name gave something
new;

Time brought its chance and change, days came and
went,

But still our love through all these changes grew.

And so, when all life's sweet things fade away,
When hair grows thin, or age our temper sours,
Still can we soothe our troubled hearts, and say
There never was a friendship such as ours.

Perhaps old age has goodly things in store.

It may be, when I leave these sultry lands,
And when I stand again on England's shore,

That we shall meet, and clasp each other's hands.

It may be then in our old rooms we'll sit,

Four ancient men, and talk of old and new,
Revive past scenes, and build up bit by bit

The story of our friendship as it grew.

And then shall we, on youthful pleasures keen,
Shake from our antique throats a tremulous bass,
Croon the old songs that used to rouse the dean
And kept the boys awake in Cowley Place.

And so for one brief hour we'll hide away
The dismal truths that stern old age might tell;
Forget that limbs are stiff, that heads are grey,
That we have heard life's warning vesper-bell.

Freshmen will laugh at four such quaint old men,
And curl their virgin lips in baby scorn.
They will not know nor care for us. What then?
The freshmen of that day are yet unborn.

Dear friends, you know I cannot take your hands.
I look, and find you nowhere in my view.
Between us stretch a hundred foreign lands:
I sit in far Cathay and sigh for you.

My richest joy comes now from memory.

Dear friends, I love you more than words can tell.
Keep in your hearts some little place for me.

Good luck be yours. God bless you all. Fare-
well.

CANTON,
1899.

THE FAIRY-LOVERS.

I.

I MAY not love as mortals love,
And poor my words may be ;
And yet to me I know that love
Is love eternally.

I cannot flatter thee or praise
As human lovers could ;
I only tell thee what I see,
And all I see is good.

Others might say thine eyes are stars
Or sparkle like the sun,

That when they're closed the earth grows dark
As when the day is done :

I will not strive to sing their praise
As others would have striven ;

I only know thine eyes to me
Are miniatures of heaven.

I may not love so fervently
As human lovers do ;
But though my heart be very small
I know that it is true.
I will not say that I can love
As none have loved before ;
I only know that when I love
I love for evermore.

II.

I know that you and I of old
Have spent long summer hours
Amid the woods of Fairyland
Among the sweet wild-flowers ;
I know your heart is warm and true,
I know you love me well :
But I go this way, you go that,
So we must say farewell.

I know those days were full of joy
And time sped quickly by,
When none was near to see us play,
None there but you and I.
But time that's flown will ne'er return
Nor heeds the wounded heart;
And that is your way, this is mine,
So you and I must part.

Yet do not think I cannot love,
My coldness do not blame;
How bright soe'er it seems at first
Love always ends the same.
The time that's flown will ne'er return
Nor heeds the wounded heart;
And I go this way, you go that,
So you and I must part.

TO D. P. H.

(*Gibraltar, 1898.*)

ON Calpe's rock the wild narcissus grows,
Lives its short life in lone humility,
Then fades away that other blooms may be,
And where it grew no living creature knows.
And that stupendous rock whereon it grows
Heedless of one poor flower's mortality
Stands changeless by the ever-changing sea,
Whose tide like life for ever ebbs and flows.
So let this fragile flower of verse, my friend,
Live its short life unharmed. Its root is frail,
Its stem made slenderly. Its petals pale
One ruthless foot, one biting breeze would rend.
So let it live its day, and when it dies
Tell no one where my dead narcissus lies.

THE SHEPHERD-LOVER'S LAMENT.

My heart is o'erburdened with care,

No gladness is mine day or night :

For she was the fairest of fair

And now she is lost to my sight.

Her lambs roam o'er mountain and fell,

Her shepherd's crook lies by the stream ;

She utter'd no word of farewell

But she fled like a summer-night's dream.

Oh what a sad destiny's mine,

To groan in despair all the day

And all the night long to repine

For the sake of a maid who's away.

Yet I'll whisper sweet things to the air

And perhaps they will reach her at last,

And she'll know there is someone somewhere

Who is thinking of days that are past.

Oh I fear with this grief I shall die

For I'm sure 'tis too heavy for me;

So a grave I will dig me anigh

The shade of this whispering tree.

And the birds that are nestling o'erhead

Will sing in the branches above

Of the fate of the lover who's dead

Because he was too much in love.

TO G. B. L.

LATELY I sat, dear Geordie, ill at ease,
Railing at fate like many a sulky child;
Nought that I heard or saw had power to please,
At all I fretted and at nothing smiled.

Too kind was fate in elder days to me;
Good friends I had who loved me and were loved;
But nearly all were far across the sea,
And I from them by half a world removed.

And so I passed my days in vague unrest,
Feeling at war with all the churlish world;
In **Gloom** I locked my sorrows in my breast
Or loud anathemas at fortune hurled.

Then lo! one morn a pitying angel bore

A letter from one cherished friend and true.

Why need I say my heart grew glad once more?—

For that same letter, Geordie, was from you.

In college days our 'oaks' were face to face,

We dwelt upon one Stair, like brothers twain;

And now, since our new homes one frontier trace,

We seem like next-door neighbours once again.

Once more I seem to see us as we were,

Life a glad heav'n and we its merry gods;

When you were still a 'Greats' philosopher,

I, a vain suitor to my mistress 'Mods.'

Once more we cleave the waters fresh and cool

That glide to meet the Thames with current *slow*;

We dive and swim in many a shadow'd pool

Where willow-weeds and water-lilies grow.

Or where the stream o'er Sandford Weir has flowed,
Tossing its spray like laughter to the air,
Upon our shoulders, bending 'neath the load,
A world of waters Atlas-like we bear.

Once more our oars dash up by Eynsham way
And make the river-eddies whirl and spin;
We stop but, once, to bid a blithe good-day
Unto the buxom maid of Godstow inn.

Again I rest upon my window seat,
You at my side, and gaze o'er Magdalen Grove,
Watching, amid a dreamy haze of heat,
The antler'd deer beneath the elm-trees rove.

Again at night we go in mood austere
To muse on tombs or ghostly secrets search.
Again I guide your lagging steps, to hear
The village-children sing in Iffley Church.

I see you with the punt-pole urge our way
Beneath the tangling willows of the Cher,
While o'er my head, like summer-flies, all day
Flit golden thoughts and fancies from afar.

I, with my Keats or Shelley, stretched at ease,
Cast languid looks at punt-pole and at you,
Or gaze half-dreaming through the netted trees
At white-sailed cloud-ships crossing seas of blue.

By Magdalen Walks we linger; overhead
Evening draws near, the sky will soon be grey;
On either side the hawthorn bushes shed
Their summer-snow of white and rosy may.

The long sweet summer-day is nearly done;
Slow fades the light, faint-tinted like a shell;
From that grand Tower, 'mid flames of setting sun,
Sounds in soft tones the evening chapel-bell.

And with the light my golden dream is fled.

No more for us shall dawn such summer days.

Partings are over and the last word said,

And you and I have gone on divers ways.

No more a little heav'n about us lies;

No more a band of jovial gods are we;

Our thrones are filled by stranger-deities

Who proudly spurn the elder dynasty.

But what though we are sever'd? To be true

O'er many miles is friendship's grandest proof.

I know I should not beg in vain from you,

And you have home where I have hearth and roof.

Your India and my China! Where are they?

Behold, my map shows yours a neighbour-race.

The frontier-line is up by Burmah way,—

There let us once again meet face to face.

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O'er dim-grown scenes in fancy we shall roam,
Challenge old joys to tilt with present pain,
Laugh at old follies, talk of friends at home,
And bring the dead days back to life again.

China and India! mighty lands are they,
With teeming hordes in black and yellow skin;
You'll hear your yellow neighbour, some bright day,
Tap at your door and say, 'Is Geordie in?'

CANTON,
1899.

SLEEP.

COME Sleep and seal mine eye-lids now
With water out of Lethe brought;
Come, lay thy hand upon a brow
That aches with fevered thought.
So let me slumber long and deep,
Forgetting death, forgetting pain,
And let no dreams perplex my sleep
That lead to earth again.

The day is long, the ways are wild,
My heart is tired and longs for rest;
I fain would creep, a weary child,
Sweet Sleep, unto thy breast.
Yet let me hear sweet strains at will
By angel-voices hymned above,
And let me see, when lying still,
The angel-face I love.

FAIRYLAND.

WE fairies are but little folk
Of fragile form are we ;
So light that when the morning comes
No token you may see
That we have danced the live-long night
Beneath the greenwood tree.

To us no pain or sorrow comes,
Our joys for ever last ;
Our merry hearts ne'er hold, like yours,
Sad memories of the past :
For we but think of present time,
No backward thought we cast.

Each night when moonlight drapes the sward
We frolic on the hill,
When all the woods are full of gloom
And half the world is still ;
The sloping valleys far and near
With melody we fill.

And sometimes mortals guided by
The moon's translucent beam
May watch us dance in forest-glades
And think 'tis all a dream ;
May hear our song, and think it is
The murmur of a stream,

Your hearts are never free from woe,
And we are merry all ;

Your race has grown to giant size
And we are light and small :

If we had griefs like you to bear
We should be just as tall.

light drapes the roof
full of gloom
still;
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**Your brows are gloom'd with silent pain,
No light is in your eyes;
In vain you seek through weary years
To solve life's mysteries.
If ye would reach our wisdom's height
Forget that ye are wise.**

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**Grope on in darkness if ye will,
Seek light where none can be;
Spend joyless lives in weary war
With voiceless destiny:
But leave us here to dance and sing
Beneath the greenwood tree.**

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IN IFFLEY CHURCHYARD.

No stranger come I to this place of gloom;
This grey church tower none know so well as I;
I know each letter'd scroll, each carven tomb,
And all the mounded graves that near me lie.
Shrink not, poor sleeper, as I pass thee by:
To-night there comes to thee no ruthless guest,
But one whose sorrow craves for sympathy.
Heart-sick, with many a dreary thought oppress'd,
I come for one short hour, sweet child, to share thy rest.
From heav'n thou camest, deigning mortal birth,
And what had we to give that thou shouldst stay?
Thou gav'st one pitying glance at us on earth
And breathed our life but half a summer's day,
Then back to heav'n thou passedst on thy way.
Christ did not die, sweet angel-child, for thee.
No need hadst thou that He by death should pay
The ransom of thy soul. 'Tis such as we
Who need that Christ should purge our soul's impurity.

Why do I vex the night with loud lament
And banish sleep by giving voice to woe?
Is mine the only heart with anguish rent?
Am I the first of all mankind to know
How mortal joys and sorrows ebb and flow?
Alas, I stand upon a lonely isle,
And see my fellow-men isled even so.
I know 'twere brave to bear my pain and smile,
Yet let me be a coward, for a little while.

I know I weep unto myself alone.

Who is so free from pain that he can spare
One little hour to hear another's groan?

Who has so little grief that he can bear
To take upon himself another's share?

Only unto the dark-veiled Night I weep,

Sweet Night, that never mocked a human care—
A weary child unto her breast I creep,
And make my quiet moan or find a dreamless sleep

Beauty of old I loved with heart and soul ;

Yet not alone because she pleased the eye,
Quicken'd the pulse-throb, or the senses stole
To fill them with a slavish ecstasy :

But that I felt, when Beauty hover'd nigh
That Truth and Good were ever with her too,
Shielding the lily of her purity.

False forms might bear her name, but still I knew
That treach'rous lights were theirs, while hers shone
ever true.

Once through phantasmal shadow-lands I strayed,
Now through fair gardens, now through deserts drear,

Beckon'd by radiant forms that never stayed,
Urged by unceasing whispers at mine ear

Bidding me cast aside all craven fear
And follow where the spirit-voices led.

And ever, for I thought my haven near,

With joyous heart and footstep light I sped,
For hope upon my path unfading glory shed.

Those visions from mine eyes have passed away ;

They beckon me no more, give me no light,
As once of old, to guide me; cold and grey
The mornings dawn that once were warm and bright:
For Beauty from the world has taken flight,
The spirit-voices now are silent too.

When life's false glow sinks into death's dark night
Will they like guiding stars return anew ?
If life can so deceive will death be found more true ?

When in Death's chamber I am lying still,
Yielding my last breath to the pensive air,
When thought is unresponsive to the will,
When lips no longer voice the inward care
And life's pale candle burns with dying flare,
When link by link my spirit breaks the chain
That once in days of old she loved to wear,
What dreams will then possess my helpless brain,
What visions pass before me in my dying pain ?

Truth's purity is dimmed by mortal breath;

God's highest thoughts are hid from all the wise.

What things are these that men call life and death?

Sages are dumb, fools prate philosophies.

Beneath this stone a little dead child lies

Whose words, if he came back to breathe our air,

Would prove us idle builders on surmise.

Those infant lips are dumb, nor do we dare

To guess if they would chide our joy or our despair.

TO A BORDER LAIRD.

WITH AN EARTHEN JAR.

CHIEFTAIN and Friend! as vassal to his king
A humble tribute herewithal I bear,
The first-fruits of my foreign wayfaring—
A little jar of Chinese earthenware.

I found it in my wanderings of late
In this remotest region of the world,
Within that mimic city o'er whose gate
Old England's flag has latest been unfurled.

'Twas not for me to enter 'mid the blare
Of martial trump and war's red blazonries;
No death-winged lightnings saw I flash in air,
No warlike thunder rolled along the skies.

I saw the empty rooms and silent streets

**Where only rats and lizards seemed awake,
Damp walls and littered floors and vacant seats
And open doors that yet no welcome spake;**

**Deserted squares and markets void of trade,
Stillness of night-time in the hour of noon;—
Only the dismal sounds my footsteps made
Awaking dreary echoes in Kowloon.**

**Watch-towers I saw, whose guardians all were fled;
Half-ruined walls where weeds unhindered grew;
And o'er this conquered city of the dead
High on the ramparts England's banner flew.**

**Beneath a lowly temple's door passed I
Wherein an ugly god in silence sat,
Watching with true divine complacency
His own large person growing wondrous fat.**

(140)

Fled were his priests, his gilded altar now
No more with all the season's fruit was piled;
None came to make his pious daily bow,
And yet the ugly god sat still and smiled.

His tinsel gems lay scattered o'er the ground,
Quaint pictures, mystic writings met my view;
And there it was that in my search I found
The little earthen jar I send to you.

I seized it, while my heart began to quake
Lest wrath divine should thunder from on high;
Yet still that super-mundane smile bespoke
A fat and philosophic deity.

I sought the door, the humble trophy mine,
Nor waited for the outraged god to speak.
Once I looked back, and still the smile divine
Bestrode his hideous face from cheek to cheek.

I own the theft, and yet my conscience sleeps;
I left the god a-smiling on his shelf;
And well I know that still his godship keeps
Smiles for the thief and for his portly self.

And why should he the daring theft resent?
To me he surely owes his proudest hour.
Henceforth his humble altar-ornament
Will deck King Robert's hall in Bonshaw Tower.

My gift will move no soul to ecstasy,
Its uncouth shape will please the eyes of few;
Yet take it, Chieftain, for it bears from me
Homage and love to Bonshaw and to you.

TAIPO,
1899.

CHRISTMAS DAY AT SEA.

I HEAR no sound of Christmas bells,
No wassail mirth, no voices gay;
Only the long sea moans and swells
And tells its old sweet tale alway
But sings no hymn for Christmas day.

I gaze afar o'er worlds of sea
Dreaming of friends I loved at home,
And muse if they spend thought on me.
I see no more the ocean foam
But homeward let my fancy roam.

There, moonlight sparkles on the grass,
The yew-tree droops with fallen snow,
The white frost shines on roof and glass,
And English homes are dress'd, I know,
With evergreen and mistletoe.

There, friend greets friend and hearts are gay;
Sweet children's eyes are homes of mirth;
I see them put their games away
And meet to sing the Child-Christ's birth,
Goodwill to men and peace on earth.

'Neath tropic suns my vessel flies
And strange the scenes that meet me here;
The wind lies still 'neath flaming skies
Death-stricken by a flaming spear
Hurled through the lurid atmosphere.

For I an exile outward-bound
Afar from home and loved ones stray;
The vast sea swells and moans around
And tells its own sad tale alway
But sings no hymn for Christmas day.

CHINA SEA,
1898.

THE KNIGHT'S TOMB.

HERE lies at rest a belted knight ;
His is a lordly tomb ;
His image carved in marble white
Glimmers in sacred gloom.

His arms are crossed upon his breast,
His sword lies close at hand ;
He was of all good knights the best,
An honour to his land.

Oft rode he forth to seek for fame,
A lance in strife to break,
First for the pride of his fair name,
Then for his lady's sake.

Above him flames the painted glass,
Its light upon him lies,
Warm colours o'er the marble pass
And costly blazonries.

His coat-armorial, richly dight,
Reveals a noble name;
Till death he kept his honour bright
Stained by no spot of shame.

What reckes he now of mortal praise?
In death's long sleep lies he.
And yet he was in olden days
The prince of chivalry.

Beside him sleeps his lady meek,
Her hands upraised in prayer;
But lo, you look in vain to seek
Sweet children imaged there.

His knightly banner hangs unfurled
For strangers' eyes to see;
But not a wight in all the world
From him claims ancestry.

